

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 118046 TOSEC 010093

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S E C R E T STATE 118046 TOSEC 010093

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: OVIP (KISSINGER, H. A.), PO, PINT

SUBJECT: INR ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT SITUATION IN PORTUGAL

NO FOREIGN DISSEM/CONTROLLED DISSEM

1. CONTINUING, AND PERHAPS PROLIFERATING, DIFFERENCES WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT (AFM) ARE POINTING TO ANOTHER CRISIS WHICH COULD PRESAGE CHANGES IN THE LEADERSHIP AND IN THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE AFM AND THE POLITICAL PARTIES. THE INCREASINGLY VOLATILE SITUATION AMONG THE PARTIES, SUPERIMPOSED ON AFM TENSIONS, TENDS TO SHARPEN THE CRISIS AND COULD EVEN THREATEN THE MAINTENANCE OF PUBLIC ORDER.

2. THE ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT'S (AFM) 240-MAN ASSEMBLY MET FOR 10 HOURS YESTERDAY, REPORTEDLY TO CONSIDER, AMONG OTHER THINGS, THE REPLACEMENT OF MODERATE AFM LEADERS, SUCH AS PRESIDENT COSTA GOMES AND ARMY CHIEF FABIAO. ACCORDING TO A LATE NIGHT COMMUNIQUE, THE ASSEMBLY DEVOTED CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION TO DECOLONIZATION AND TO THE CREATION OF "DIRECT LINKS BETWEEN THE MILITARY AND THE PEOPLE," BUT NO

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 118046 TOSEC 010093

MENTION WAS MADE OF ANY LEADERSHIP CHANGES, AND THE SESSION

APPARENTLY ADJOURNED WITHOUT ANY DECISIONS BEING MADE. A SPECIAL SESSION WILL PROBABLY BE HELD WITHIN A WEEK TO CONTINUE THE DISCUSSION.

3. AFM MODERATES CLEARLY ARE VULNERABLE. HOWEVER, THE OUSTER OF COSTA GOMES, WHO THUS FAR HAS EXECUTED AN IMPRESSIVE POLITICAL BALANCING ACT, WOULD BE NO EASY MATTER. THE OUTCOME WOULD LIKELY DEPEND ON WHETHER ADMIRAL ROSA COUTINHO AND HIS GROUP MADE COMMON CAUSE WITH PRIME MINISTER GONCALVES AND HIS FOLLOWERS. ROSA COUTINHO'S AMBITION COULD LEAD HIM INTO A TEMPORARY, ALBEIT APPARENTLY UNEASY, ALLIANCE WITH GONCALVES.

4. ASIDE FROM ONGOING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AFM RADICALS AND MODERATES AND CONFLICTING AMBITIONS WITHIN THE RADICAL CAMP ITSELF (E.G., BETWEEN ROSA COUTINHO AND GONCALVES), CURRENT TENSIONS APPEAR TO STEM FROM A VARIETY OF FACTORS.

--(A) THE AFM LEADERSHIP SEES ITSELF THREATENED BY THE SOCIALISTS' VICTORY IN THE APRIL 25 ELECTION.

--(B) AGGRESSIVE TACTICS BY THE SOCIALISTS AND COMMUNISTS, WHICH COULD THREATEN PUBLIC ORDER, HAVE EXACERBATED ALREADY STRAINED RELATIONS BETWEEN THE PARTIES AND THE AFM. (YESTERDAY COMMUNIST WORKERS SEIZED CONTROL OF THE SOCIALIST NEWSPAPER REPUBLICA, AND THE SOCIALISTS RESPONDED BY MOUNTING A LARGE DEMONSTRATION OUTSIDE. THE GOVERNMENT THEN CLOSED DOWN THE PAPER, PENDING A "FINAL SOLUTION.")

--(C) THERE IS GROWING EVIDENCE OF INDISCIPLINE AND POLITICAL DIVISIONS WITHIN THE MILITARY. MODERATE AIR FORCE PILOTS REPORTEDLY ARE CONSIDERING RESIGNING EN MASSE TO PROTEST THE RECENT SACKING OF THE MODERATE AIR FORCE CHIEF OF STAFF, WHILE ON THE EXTREME LEFT THERE ARE INDICATIONS OF MAOIST INFLUENCE IN SOME MILITARY UNITS. OVER THE WEEKEND A BANNED MAOIST POLITICAL PARTY AND A FAR-LEFT MILITARY UNIT ANNOUNCED THE DISCOVERY OF ALLEGED RIGHTIST PLOT AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT AND REPORTEDLY INSTIGATED AS MANY AS 50 ARRESTS OF ALLEGED PLOTTERS.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 STATE 118046 TOSEC 010093

ALVARO CUNHAL AND THE ORTHODOX COMMUNISTS HAVE RESPONDED WITH ATTACKS ON THE "ABSURD BEHAVIOR" OF THE FAR LEFT AND WITH POINTED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE LACK OF AUTHORITY AND MILITARY DISCIPLINE IN THE COUNTRY.

--(D) WORSENING DIFFICULTIES IN DECOLONIZING ANGOLA ARE ALSO CONTRIBUTING TO PRESENT UNCERTAINTIES. ALTHOUGH AFM LEADERS ARE GENERALLY AGREED ON THE NECESSITY OF EXTRI-

CATING PORTUGAL FROM AFRICA, CONTINUING UNREST IN ANGOLA

MAY BE LEADING TO DIFFERENCES AS TO MEANS AND IS CLOUD-
ING THE POLITICAL FUTURES OF SOME IMPORTANT AFM FIGURES,
NOTABLY ROSA COUTINHO AND FOREIGN MINISTER ANTUNES, WHO
ARE CLOSELY IDENTIFIED WITH THE DECOLONIZATION EFFORT.

5. THE OUTCOME IS UNCERTAIN, AND THE CURRENT TENSIONS
COULD SUBSIDE WITHOUT ANY DEFINITIVE RESOLUTION OF
DIFFERENCES. HOWEVER, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT SOME MODERATE
AFM LEADERS WILL BE REPLACED AND THAT THE AFM WILL MOVE
TOWARD CREATING ITS OWN CIVILIAN POLITICAL "MOVEMENT,"
PERHAPS WITH THE ACCOMPANYING DISMANTLING, OR AT LEAST
DOWNGRADING, OF THE EXISTING POLITICAL PARTIES.
WARNING NOTICE SENSITIVE SOURCES AND METHODS INVOLVED. INGERSOLL

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